



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FOUR PLEAD GUILTY TO BRANDISHING FIREARMS DURING ILLEGAL ALIEN HOSTAGE TAKING

PHOENIX - Rigoberto Aramburo-Lizzaraga, 25; Juan Andres Ramirez-Aguirre, 34; Franki Alfonso Garcia-Sustaita 31; and, Santiago Casteneda-Aramburo 18, all of Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico, pleaded guilty to Using, Carrying and Brandishing a Firearm During and in Relation to a Crime of Violence (Hostage Taking) in a Federal District Court in Phoenix. All the defendants pleaded over the past two weeks in front of U.S. District Judge Stephen M. McNamee.

The defendants had been charged with Conspiracy to Commit Hostage Taking, Hostage Taking, the Use, Carrying and Brandishing of a Firearm During and in Relation to a Crime of Violence (Hostage Taking), Conspiracy to Harbor Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain, and Harboring Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain. The original complaint indicated that law enforcement officials encountered over 50 illegal aliens at a house in Avondale, Ariz.

The indictment alleged that from March 3 - 10, 2008, the defendants held five illegal aliens hostage in a house in Avondale in order to compel others to pay money to secure the hostages' release. The indictment further alleged that while detaining the aliens, the defendants used, carried, and brandished firearms. Finally, the indictment alleged that the defendants conspired to harbor, and did harbor, aliens for the purpose of private financial gain.

Sentencing for Garcia-Sustaita is set for March 9, 2009 and for the remaining defendants on March 16, 2009, all before Judge McNamee. A conviction for Using and Carrying a Firearm During and in Relation to a Crime of Violence in which the gun was brandished carries a mandatory minimum penalty of seven years in prison and a maximum penalty of life in prison. The charge also carries a potential maximum fine of \$250,000 which can be imposed in the alternative or in addition to the potential prison sentence. Under the terms of the plea agreements, the defendants will face no more than 30 years (360 months) in federal custody. In determining an actual sentence Judge McNamee will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The Judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

The investigation preceding the Indictment was conducted U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Avondale Police Department. The prosecution has been handled by Josh Patrick Parecki and Lisa Jennis Settel, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-08-0263-PHX-SMM
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